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Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 14 October 2004, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Groux (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Switzerland)

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04-55285 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 94 (a): Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.2)

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.2: Celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond

1. **The Chairperson** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

2. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.2 was adopted.*

Agenda item 96: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.3, L.4, L.5, L.6, L.7, L.8 and L.9)

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.3: Preparations for the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

3. **The Secretary** read out a statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the draft resolution.

4. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.3 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.4: Assistance to least developed countries to ensure their participation in the sessions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the sessions of conferences of States parties

5. **The Chairperson** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

6. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.4 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.5: Strengthening international cooperation and technical assistance in promoting the implementation of the universal conventions and protocols related to terrorism within the framework of the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

7. **The Secretary** read out a statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the draft resolution.

8. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.5 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.6: International cooperation in the prevention, combating and elimination of kidnapping and in providing assistance to victims

9. The Secretary read out a statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the draft resolution.

10. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.6 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.7: Action against corruption: assistance to States in capacity building with a view to facilitating the entry into force and subsequent implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption

11. **The Secretary** read out a statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the draft resolution.

12. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.7 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.8: Preventing, combating and punishing trafficking in human organs

13. **The Secretary** read out a statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the draft resolution.

14. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.8 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.9: International cooperation in the fight against transnational organized crime: assistance to States in capacity-building with a view to facilitating the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto

15. **The Secretary** read out a statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the draft resolution.

16. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.9 was adopted.*

Agenda item 97: International drug control (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.10, L.11 and L.12)

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.10: Control of cultivation of and trafficking in cannabis

17. **The Chairperson** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

18. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.10 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.11, Providing support to the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to eliminate illicit opium and foster stability and security in the region

19. **The Chairperson** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

20. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.11 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.12: Follow-up on strengthening the systems of control over chemical precursors and preventing their diversion and trafficking

21. **The Secretary** read out a statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the draft resolution.

22. *Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.12 was adopted.*

23. **Mr. Atia** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, had taken place shortly after the Conference of Copenhagen and had been followed by a series of United Nations conferences and summits, such as the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Ten years after Beijing there was a new vision of changes in the world at all levels. To implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it was necessary to ensure a more balanced distribution of wealth, because poverty was a threat to the stability, peace and security of the international community. Poverty in the developing countries affected mainly women and girls, causing high illiteracy rates and aggravating health conditions.

24. The results appearing in report A/50/9/214 were very satisfactory, but further efforts were needed in order to improve on the progress achieved with regard to mainstreaming the gender perspective in the areas of politics and the economy. Women did not yet participate in decision-making concerning such issues as combating poverty, hunger, illness, conflicts, war and occupation, which affected to a greater measure women.

25. Regarding trafficking in women (report A/59/185), dealing with the problem and implementing the relevant bilateral, regional and international agreements in order to track down the perpetrators and punish them for their activities required the participation of all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media. In 2004, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). According to the Koran, all persons should respect the law and be free from slavery. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had enacted laws that guaranteed the rights of women. Libyan women had left underdevelopment and could even engage in armed combat to defend their country.

26. African women, victims of poverty, illiteracy and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, gave cause for concern. A major commitment of the international community was necessary to enable Africa to meet its obligations under the outcomes of the Beijing Conference. The suffering of Palestinian women and girls in the territories occupied by Israel should be stressed. The destruction and lack of access to water and food to which they were subjected constituted a crime against humanity, on which the international community kept silent. It was necessary to further the advancement of women, avert the violation of their rights and promoting an environment conducive to diversity.

27. **Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation) said that the ten-year review of the implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women would take place soon. The results achieved in the past five years had been excellent. It would be counterproductive to draw up a completely renewed programme document outlining new national and international obligations, because the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly were effective means of ensuring progress towards gender equality. What was necessary was attaining the goals already set. The Secretary-General's report that would mark the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference would provide a detailed analysis of the situation of women's rights should serve as the basis for debate at high-level meetings.

28. The Russian Federation respected international conventions on gender equality and the improvement of the status of women. It had recently ratified the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW). In cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), it had drawn up a document related to CEDAW that

described the relevant legislation in the country, where a reform of social policies, administrative mechanisms and budget procedures had taken place to give due consideration to gender equality. In September 2004, a meeting of experts had been held in Moscow with the cooperation of Canada and the participation of representatives of the Government, the federal and regional legislative bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international institutions with a view to formulating a gender-equality policy. The meeting had adopted a draft strategy for attaining such equality in the Russian Federation. The next step should be a plan of action for implementing the guidelines provided in that document.

29. With regard to human trafficking, the Russian Federation had ratified in April 2004 the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its optional protocols, including the Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, after amending national legislation and the criminal code to toughen penalties. New mechanisms for repressing trafficking were being set up and links had been established between the Ministry of the Interior and competent foreign bodies. Moreover, technical links had been established with national coordination centres in line with the guidelines of the Group of Eight and the associated countries, and there was dialogue with the police of various countries. In that regard, the Russian Federation Government ascribed great importance to cooperation with NGOs. Again in 2004, the Association shelters for women, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour and NGOs that combated human trafficking, had organized training seminars. In January 2004, the first Russian National Assembly of NGOs had convened to deliberate on the fight against human trafficking in the presence of representatives of the legislature and the executive.

30. **Mr. Tidjani** (Cameroon) endorsed the statement made by the delegation of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 in China. In view of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), it was necessary to evaluate the progress that had been made in implementing the various essential legal instruments on the status of women and study the obstacles to its full, speedy and effective implementation.

31. Women and girls continued to be victims various abuses that gave Cameroon serious cause for concern, such as human trafficking, sexual exploitation, some forms of violence and marginalization and degrading practices harmful to health. The speaker praised the efforts of the international community in formulating and implementing policies for improving the status of women, and the work of the United Nations in developing an active policy for mainstreaming the gender perspectives in all agencies, although his delegation endorsed the recommendation for further and more detailed analyses in that area. Women's role in peacekeeping operations and international security was important. Resolution 1325 (2000) of the Security Council did justice to women and would increase the effectiveness of United Nations activities. Cameroon applauded the appointment of a significant number of women to decision-making posts in the Secretariat.

32. Violence against women, which manifested itself under various forms in all societies, represented an urgent challenge to the international community. Cameroon welcomed the legislative measures taken at national level to combat that phenomenon, and the awareness-raising activities undertaken, but much remained to be done. The Declaration of Principles adopted in December 2003 as an outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) could be very useful in that regard.

33. Combating poverty and improving the living conditions of vulnerable social groups, particularly women, had always been one of Cameroon's priorities. Accordingly, it had ratified the main international legal instruments that protected women's rights and was currently concluding the process of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW. Furthermore, a family code, focusing on women in rural areas and small settlements, and a draft law on violence against women that would punish female genital mutilation (FGM), were in preparation.

34. The movement towards gender equality, the fight against violence and the ever more important role played by women in eradicating poverty constituted an irreversible process, slowed down only for social reasons in some societies where the introduction of new values threatened the established social structure. Such mentalities should change, not through decrees or convictions but by means of education, training and raising the population's awareness. The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and

Platform for Action and of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly required the enactment of appropriate legislation at the national level, and also international cooperation in the form of specific activities.

35. **Ms. Vikor** (Norway) said that the United Nations had created an impressive body of norms. However, 25 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), many States maintained reservations. Norway called for the universal ratification of CEDAW, because there would be no equity and development until the rights enshrined in the Convention became effective worldwide. Women and girls suffered most from gender disparity, but ultimately society as a whole paid the price. Countries that discriminated against women were likely to stagnate economically and failed to develop well-functioning democratic institutions based on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

36. Laws must be put into practise, even in times of crisis and conflict and in post-conflict situations. Ensuring justice for women was crucial to establishing the rule of law and consolidating peace. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security highlighted the need for women and men alike to be both agents and beneficiaries of the efforts to advance peace and justice in post-conflict settings. The resolution had attracted much attention because it treated women not only as victims of conflicts, but also as resources vital to their resolution. The provisions of the resolution should be implemented in the field and at every level of planning and decision-making. Lasting peace could not be established without the participation of women and the inclusion of a gender perspective in peace processes. The United Nations governing bodies should monitor the mainstreaming process, which was of great interest to the General Assembly. More reports should contain recommendations for further action to promote gender equality.

37. Gender equality started in the home. Accordingly, Norway welcomed the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) concerning the roles of men and boys in achieving gender equality.

38. The following year, 2005, would be marked by the review of progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and by the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference. Norway looked forward to CSW's critical examination of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Furthermore, it was essential that the next phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) should cover issues related to women and especially young women's interests.

39. Norway welcomed the recent appointment of the Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. That position was crucial to promoting gender equality in the work of the United Nations. Norway was committed to contributing to progress in that area and looked forward to cooperating closely with the Special Adviser.

40. **Mr. Tekin** (Turkey) stated that the discrimination that women continued to face in almost all parts of the world underscored the need for effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), which largely depended on the political will of the States parties. They should translate their commitments into effective action. Turkey appreciated the work of the CEDAW Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, its Chairperson, Ms. Feride Acar, and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Ms. Yakin Ertürk, both of Turkish nationality. Turkey had fulfilled most of its commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, achieved significant progress in the area of gender equality, and continued its efforts to deal with remaining problems.

41. The advancement of women had been an essential element in the modernization efforts of the Republic of Turkey since its inception in 1923. To further strengthen the principle of equality between men and women had undertaken in recent years comprehensive legislative reforms, one of the most important of which was the adoption of a new Criminal Code. The new Code criminalized sexual assault within marriage, stipulated stiffer sentences for polygamy and non-registered religious marriages and provided for prison sentences for those who conducted or ordered virginity tests without a court order. Moreover, it considered as an aggravating circumstance the fact that a crime against life was committed in the name of tradition or

custom, as in the case of honour crimes. Mitigating clauses regarding such crimes had been removed.

42. Honour crimes were one of the most despicable forms of violence committed against women and girls. In Turkey, the public debate encouraged in recent years by the Government, civil society and the media began to bear fruit. Honour crimes were not limited to any particular group of countries or have any relation to religion. They were prompted by patriarchal values and standards that existed in many places and whose eradication required, on the one hand, effective legislation ensuring the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators and, on the other hand, preventive measures and campaigns of information and awareness-raising promoting the rejection of such offences.

43. **Ms. Kusorgbor** (Ghana) said that, subsequent to the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the world had increasingly acknowledged the important role of women and the need to improve their status in all societies. Nevertheless, women all over the world continued to face numerous challenges stemming from discrimination and disregard for their basic human rights on account of their gender. Therefore, States should reflect on how best to pursue the goals of gender equality and the advancement of women.

44. In affirmation of Ghana's commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Ghana had developed policies and instituted legal and administrative measures to ensure that the rights of women were respected and protected. In order to bridge persisting gender inequalities in access to social, political and economic opportunities and service delivery, policies and programmes were being implemented to mainstream gender perspectives in all areas and affirmative action was being promoted to cultivate gender sensitivity in all decision-making processes and at all levels in accordance with the Beijing and African Platforms for Action.

45. Violence against women was an affront to women's dignity and human rights and should not be countenanced. The magnitude and complexity of the problem of violence against women necessitated a holistic approach that included an examination of the causes and consequences of the phenomenon and ensured that appropriate measures were in place to defend the right of women to live violence-free lives. The seven treaty bodies should continue to address the issue of violence against women within their mandates and from their perspectives. Dialogue between States parties and these treaty bodies provided an opportunity to positively influence policy development and change.

46. In recent years there had been a sudden increase in cases of violence against women in Ghana. Monitoring of the situation had revealed that most women endured domestic violence because they were ignorant of their rights and economically dependent on their male partners. In response, the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs was spear-heading nation-wide awareness-raising programmes to inform women of their rights and endeavoured to further the economic empowerment of women through microfinance projects at local and district levels. Furthermore, a domestic violence would soon be adopted by the Parliament to strengthen the existing legal mechanisms and contribute to greater gender equality.

47. With regard to trafficking in persons, international cooperation, enforcement of regulations, prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims were imperative. At the national level, a task force on trafficking in persons had been established to coordinate policies and other measures aimed at preventing it. The task force was currently overseeing the development of a draft bill on the issue, which should address all aspects of that social problem.

48. **Ms. Chancy** (Haiti) endorsed the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that, despite progress made under the Beijing Platform for Action in improving the status of women, many challenges remained. One of them was poverty, which affected women in particular, in both rural and urban areas. Therefore, in initiatives to combat that scourge special attention should be paid to women. In that context, Haiti reaffirmed its commitment to Brazil's initiative for a world alliance against hunger and poverty.

49. The limited data disaggregated by gender that were available gave some idea of the situation of women in Haiti. Despite their significant contribution to the economy, their work was undervalued and they were subjected to professional segregation and unequal remuneration practices. Equal access to education was undermined by the girls' higher dropout rate.

Moreover, there was a lack of information and awareness of women's rights regarding health, and of sex education programmes promoting respect of their rights and raising boys' awareness of their responsibilities. Women's presence in decision-making posts in public administration and the political parties was inadequate. Regarding the aspect of law and justice, Haitian legislation considered women as second-rate citizens. Moreover, the fact that legislation was not available in Creole, spoken by all Haitians and sole language of 95 percent of the population, was a major obstacle to access to justice.

50. It was in that context that the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Rights, defended and promoted women's rights and gender mainstreaming. The Ministry was drafting bills to close gaps in the legislation and amend discriminatory laws. Currently, Ministry activities focused on responsible paternity, consensual unions and new abortion regulations, adultery, sexual aggression, the education of girls and working conditions of house servants.

51. The Ministry cooperated with other public and civil-society bodies, especially women's organizations. In the area of health, for instance, it cooperated with the Ministry of Health and Population in order to enhance women's access to health, one of its priorities. Another priority of Haiti was combating HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, such as malaria. The international community should pay greater attention to such diseases in order to consolidate the progress achieved.

52. Aware that respect for women's physical and mental integrity was indispensable, Haiti tried to prevent and combat gender-based violence. In situations of general coercion, such as after the 1991 coup d'état or the period of political instability recently experienced by Haiti, violence against women had been used as a means of repression and dissuasion. That exceptional form of violence stemmed from a broader phenomenon of daily violence against women. Lastly, Haiti reiterated its determination to improve the status of Haitian women and its confidence that the international community would assist it in that effort.

53. **Ms. Rasheed** (Palestine) stressed that millions of women worldwide still lived in situations that denied them their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The international community should be united in recognizing that strengthening women's rights was a common goal that must be based on universal human rights, the rule of law and a strong commitment to justice, equality and freedom. Colonial occupation had become a system of control permeating every aspect of Palestinian life, including the lives of Palestinian women, preventing the enjoyment of the rights to life, liberty and security and the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Even so, Palestinian women continued to fight inequality and discrimination in order to play an active and effective role within their society.

54. Israel, the occupying Power, continued to commit serious violations and grave breaches of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The vicious military campaign carried out by Israel in the past four years had resulted in the death of over 3,400 Palestinian civilians, including over 250 women and 750 children, and the injury of over 50,000 Palestinians, including many who suffered from permanent disabilities.

55. The suffering inflicted on Palestinian women by the Israeli policy of constant terror and aggression could not be sufficiently emphasized. Palestinian women, who wished their families to lead a secure, full and healthy life, must counter the illegal activities of Israel, which in recent years had demolished more than 10,000 Palestinian dwellings, leaving thousands of families homeless and condemning thousands of women to fight for survival, recovering their children from the rubble, and had confiscated millions of dunum of Palestinian farmland to expand the existing illegal settlements or build new ones, depriving Palestinian women of their livelihood and their right to feed their children.

56. The difficult situation of Palestinian women and the serious humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, had been aggravated by the illegal construction of the expansionist wall. The wall separated Palestinians from their land, work, hospitals, schools, churches, mosques and families, preventing them from leading a normal life. The devastating consequences of the wall had led the International Court of Justice to declare, in its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, that the construction of the wall by Israel ran counter to international law.

57. There was no justification for assassinating women and children in their homes with missiles, shooting them from tanks and helicopters or crushing

them under blocks of concrete when demolishing their homes. There was no justification for pregnant Palestinian women dying when giving birth because they were held at checkpoints or for depriving the newborn babies of their chances to live by preventing delivery in a hospital. There was no justification for the alarming indicators on malnutrition and anaemia among children and women, who were denied the right to access to food, drinking water and adequate medical care, nor for the continuing violations of international law committed by Israel nor for its gratuitous contempt for human life and dignity.

58. The situation of Palestinian women, and of the Palestinian people as a whole, could not improve under an occupation characterized by human-rights violations, colonialism, racism and discrimination. The international community should put an end to the occupation and Israel's illegal policies and practices and safeguard dignity, equality, liberty and justice on behalf of the Palestinian people and humanity as a whole.

59. Ms. **Muuondjo** (Namibia) endorsed the statements made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Malawi on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and stated that Namibia remained firmly committed to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. While progress had been made in some respects, there were still inequalities in such areas as literacy, access to health services and gender-based violence. The Namibian Constitution guaranteed equal rights to all citizens and forbade inhuman treatment and the Government had shown its commitment to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women through its national policies, the national legislation and the ratification of international instruments protecting and promoting gender equality. A national gender-policy had been adopted in 1997 and a national gender plan of action developed to support its implementation.

60. The elimination of violence against women and children was high on the national agenda. Although there were still instances where traditional norms, beliefs and practices and even attitudes encouraged violence against women and children, various laws had been enacted to combat and eliminate all forms of violence against women in public and private life, such as the acts on combating rape, combating domestic violence, affirmative action (employment), married equality and labour. Another related initiative had been the launching of a multimedia campaign on violence against women and children, with the participation of government representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and concerned individuals. Among the key challenges facing the Government was the lack of an enabling act that would ensure the implementation of the national gender policy. Although considerable efforts were made regarding gender issues, there was a pervasive negative attitude towards gender equality leading to marginalization of issues in some programmes as a result of cultural and traditional perceptions. Despite the enactment of laws dealing with violence, the incidence of gender-based violence was escalating and there was an insufficient number of shelters for abused women and children and only limited rehabilitation programmes targeting the perpetrators.

61. Namibia recognized that primary responsibility for implementing gender policies rested with national governments but believed that national institutions, particularly in the least developed countries (LDCs) and the developing countries, required support and assistance from the developed partners, especially in capacity building for implementing national gender policies. In that regard, Namibia commended organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Fund for the Development of Women (UNIFEM) for their women's rights promotion initiatives.

62. The forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which would coincide with the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the thirtieth anniversary of the First World Conference on Women, would provide the international community with an opportunity to outline its gender-equality commitments and gender mainstreaming strategies. The Namibian delegation concurred with the Secretary-General's recommendation that specific steps should be taken to implement and follow-up on major international conferences and summits, in the context of the upcoming review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Namibia recommended a gender focus in all 2005 review processes.

63. Ms. **Hill** (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, reaffirmed the

commitment of the Governments of those countries to the Beijing Platform for Action, which had provided the various countries with a common goal and a specific plan for bringing about tangible changes in the lives of women and men worldwide. Accordingly, the three countries joined those that stressed the need to implement women's rights under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, agreeing that the promotion of those rights was fundamental in view of the complex issues of growth, prosperity and security that all Member States of the United Nations faced. Australia, Canada and New Zealand had national action plans for promoting work in the area of women's rights and progress in all critical areas identified in the Platform for Action. Since 1995, they had incorporated a gender perspective in their assistance policies and programmes and continued to channel considerable resources to gender issues, including activities in support of the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

64. The elimination of violence against women, both in those countries and in the world as a whole, was a top priority for Australia, Canada and New Zealand. No form of violence was justified or should be condoned by the family, the community or the State. New Zealand implemented since 2000 a new comprehensive strategy for preventing domestic violence (Te Rito). Australia continued to implement the Partnerships against Domestic Violence initiative launched in 1997, and Canada continued to implement the Family Violence Initiative, also begun in 1997. Such work would continue until all forms of violence were eliminated from the society of the three countries.

65. The Governments of Australia, Canada and New Zealand reaffirmed the importance of sexual- and reproductive-health rights as set down at the International Conference on Population and Development at Cairo in 1994 and at the Beijing Conference in 1995. All too often, women suffered or died in circumstances that were preventable. They died because they lacked information about their choices and access to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning and because they had limited freedom to decide when to have sex and when to have children.

66. The commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference would be a time to bring once again the rights of women to the world's attention, raise awareness among the population, change attitudes and take the next steps in implementing the Platform for Action. Since the Platform for Action was a fundamental building block in the international human-rights and development architecture, its implementation was essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was therefore imperative that the rights of women should be at the forefront of deliberations at the high-level meeting to be held in 2005 for the comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. During the important commemorations of that year, the international community should be aware of the fact that it had laboured too long over language in human rights treaties, platforms of action and declarations and that it was time to take action to realise the rights of women throughout the world.

67. **Ms. Chan** (Singapore) said that to ensure humanity's progress of men and women must work together on an equal footing. The basic human rights of women should be given as much respect and protection as those of men and women should have the same level of opportunity to develop their full potential. In Singapore, the enjoyment of women's rights was ensured through legislation and a firm belief in equal opportunity, grounded in the principle of meritocracy. Women were not perceived as a minority or disadvantaged group requiring special attention.

68. In order for women to compete on an equal footing with men, they must first be given equal access to education and healthcare. The Singapore Government was committed to providing both girls and boys with equal access to quality education. Bearing this firmly in mind, the Government had invested, in 2003, 3.8 percent of GDP (US$6.1 billion) towards education. As a result of that policy, Singapore had a high literacy rate among women. For resident females aged 15 years and over, it had improved from 88 percent in 1999 to 91 percent in 2003, and 51 percent of women attended university. In Singapore, men and women had equal access to quality healthcare. Women's life expectancy at birth had increased from 80.4 years in 2001 to 80.9 years in 2003. In the same period, the maternal mortality rate had dropped from 10 to 5 per 100,000 live and stillbirths.

69. In the new millennium, a woman's place was no longer confined only to the home. She should be given the opportunity to choose to contribute to the home or to the workplace, the community, the nation, the

international community or to any combination of those areas. Given the opportunities, more Singapore women were choosing to enter the workforce and the female labour force participation rate was 54 percent in 2003, up from 51 percent in 1992. In recent years, women had started to break through what had earlier been glass ceilings in the public and private sectors - as top civil servants and managing directors of multinational corporations in Singapore. Women's role in politics had advanced significant in August 2004, when the Prime Minister had appointed three women political office holders as part of his team and publicly urged women to participate in politics. There had also been a two-fold increase in the number of female members of Parliament. Singapore women are doing very well in sports: More female than male athletes had represented Singapore in the recent Olympic Games.

70. **Mr. Taranda** (Belarus) welcomed the fact that gender-equality issues and the promotion of women were increasingly taken into account and more new programmes and strategies were adopted in that regard. The generalization of a gender perspective in the United Nations and the incorporation of gender equality in all activities of the Organization were two consequences of the practical implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the international level. Evidently, however, there was a need for more results-oriented decisions and for specific measures ensuring the pursuit of gender equality and the promotion of the rights and opportunities of women on a broader basis.

71. The Republic of Belarus ascribed particular importance to the enhancement of the status of women and gender equality. Its national strategy, based on the Beijing Platform for Action, aimed at increasing the opportunities for women's participation and helping them to develop their potential at the social, professional and political levels. The main thrusts of national policy in that area were laid down in the second national plan of action for achieving equality (2001-2005) and the countrywide programme "Women of the Republic of Belarus". As part of measures taken to improve the legal framework for the protection of women, a draft law on gender equality had been prepared in 2004, amending and completing the Family Code with a view to preventing and eradicating domestic violence, preventing gender-based discrimination and strengthening gender equality within the family. Regarding education, the establishment of education systems promoting equality had continued and various higher education institutions had introduced specialized courses and revised their study programmes to eliminate stereotypes.

72. As part of national strategy implementation, cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had increased in a variety of areas ranging from the participation of women's organizations in the development of plans and programmes to the provision of public funding for projects carried out by NGOs. That process had also received assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the context of a project promoting women's participation in the public sector.

73. Belarus had undertaken extensive initiatives against human trafficking, including improving legislation and statistics, strengthening the specialized law-enforcement agencies, establishing a network to assist the victims of trafficking and awareness-raising and information activities. A national programme for the period 2002-2007 provided for a series of measures against human trafficking and prostitution through various projects, including in particular a project, conducted jointly by the Government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the TACIS programme of the European Union, for combating trafficking in women in the Republic of Belarus. In November 2003, an international conference on the legislation of Belarus and the European Union countries on combating trafficking in women had been held in Minsk, and the Government would continue to cooperate and exchange information in that area. Cooperation with the United Nations Fund for the Development of Women (UNIFEM), UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was crucial: through technical assistance projects, it had permitted an efficient implementation of national policies for improving the status of women, and Belarus hoped that it would increase.

74. In January 2004, Belarus had presented to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) periodic reports 4, 5 and 6 on the implementation of the Convention, and would examine thoroughly the Committee's observations with a view to taking them into account in the national strategies. The country had been one of the first to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols,

particularly the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

75. **Mr. Asmady** (Indonesia) endorsed the statement made by Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that — in view of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — gender equality and women's empowerment should be incorporated into every activity undertaken by United Nations entities and intergovernmental bodies.

76. Indonesia strongly supported international initiatives to promote women's rights and moved steadily forward in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In that regard, it was essential to note that different cultural characteristics and levels of development were a key factor in determining workable and effective implementation of gender empowerment programmes in each country. In Indonesia, women's empowerment was a national priority and a common concern of government units, public institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women's organizations and the media. In that connection, Indonesia valued highly the significant contribution of President Megawati Soekarnoputri to such efforts and to the further progress of democratization and reform in Indonesia.

77. At the local level, gender-mainstreaming activities had focused on empowering institutions to be gender-responsive, through training and financial support, and on collaborating with community-based organizations and NGOs. Simultaneously, the provincial and district Parliaments were responsible for harmonizing regulations and establishing local infrastructures for gender mainstreaming. In the last elections, a stronger foundation had been laid for women's participation in politics, since, under Law No. 12/2003, all political party were required to ensure that at least 30 percent of their candidates to the national, provincial and local Parliaments were women.

78. Indonesia paid particular attention to issues of violence against women. It had recently enacted a law on the elimination of domestic violence and was currently scrutinizing bills on making trafficking in persons, especially women and children, a crime. Two presidential decrees issued in 2002 had established the National action plan for the elimination of trafficking in women and children and the National action plan for the elimination of the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

79. With regard to the review and evaluation of progress made toward attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly MGD 3, Indonesia was of the view that special attention should be paid to achievements so far in eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education by 2015. Although fully aware that progress on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment was mainly the responsibility of each Member States, Indonesia believed that it was crucial to take integrated and consistent measures, involving diverse stakeholders at all levels, and to strengthen partnerships among countries in that area.

80. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 in China and said that the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), main instrument of promotion and protection of the rights of women worldwide, had favoured the emancipation of women and had encouraged them to defend firmly their rights.

81. The Government of Gabon recognized women's central role in the development of peace. Since the ratification of CEDAW in 1982, Gabon had gradually established a legal and political framework conducive to promoting and protecting women's rights. Examples of such initiatives had been the creation of a Ministry for the Promotion of Women, the adoption of laws recognizing women's right to participate in public life on an equal footing with men and the implementation of various projects intended to facilitate their access to microcredit. Moreover, Gabonese women had formed various financial associations in order to participate in the country's development.

82. The Ministry for the Family, the Protection of Children and the Promotion of Women, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had launched a unit monitoring women's rights and gender equality, whose main mission consisted in defending those rights women and amending any legal provisions that were discriminatory

under the Constitution. Government action supported the coordinated work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women's associations. The President of the Republic had made a personal commitment to progress in that area when, for instance, he addressed the mistreatment of widows in some families and declaring in 1998 the National Day of the Gabonese Woman, observed since then on 17 April. To complement and better coordinate all measures taken for the promotion of women, the Government had set up the National commission of the family and the promotion of women and an Interministerial Commission responsible for reviewing in detail all texts that contained discriminatory provisions.

83. The delegation of Gabon believed firmly that women could constitute a powerful vector of economic and social development, if they were sufficiently represented at the national and international levels. In Gabon, women currently participated in the Government, Parliament, political parties and public and private enterprises. It was essential to strengthen the presence of women in the United Nations system and it was regrettable the low percentage of African women in the Organization.

84. It was necessary to reaffirm and fulfil commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The delegation of Gabon stressed that women were the main victims of poverty and of armed conflicts. If their participation in peace- and development-processes were not reinforced, it would be very difficult to establish equity, justice and solidarity in the world.

85. **Ms. Kleitman** (Israel) said that the advancement of women was not a "women's issue". It was an issue for society as a whole. There was a direct correlation between the status of women in a particular society and that society's own condition. Unlike too many countries in the world and almost every country in the Middle East, women in Israel were given opportunities equal to men's in every area of life. However, the advancement of women was not a strictly a domestic issue any more than it was a strictly international issue. Accordingly, Israel appreciated the appointment of a Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women by the Secretary General, and views it as signal of the priority given to gender issues on the United Nations agenda.

86. Israel placed gender equality very high on its list of priorities and was committed to the elimination of discrimination against women. In 1998, the establishment of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in the Prime Minister's Office had opened a new era of increased use of legislative and executive power to foster programmes and policies based on gender equality, and promoting gender mainstreaming throughout society. The Israeli Government had also created the Parliamentary Committee for the Advancement of Women, and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the advancement of women in Israel. In 2002, the State of Israel had established the Council for the Advancement of Women in Science and Technology, composed of men and women who represented varied public and private scientific and academic areas. Through such initiatives, Israel hoped to eliminate gender gaps in every field.

87. Violence against women was a serious problem in Israel, as in many countries. Over the past few years, however, Israeli government bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been able to bring the problem to the forefront of public awareness, a critical step in combating it. For more than ten years, there had existed in Israel extensive legislation on violence against women, much of it authored by feminist NGO's in coordination with the Parliament Committee of the Status of Women. That legislation had done much to protect women. It was based strongly on the idea that gender-based violence, or even the credible threat of such violence, are not solely a threat to the safety of a particular woman, but rather an affront to all women's rights to dignity and liberty.

88. In addition to legislative measures, Israeli women were being informed about their rights. Workshops were conducted for violent spouses, and law enforcement officials and members of the judiciary received special training. There were 15 government shelters for battered spouses, including two for Arab women, and 50 centres for the prevention of violence against women, including programmes aimed at violent husbands.

89. Poverty was a particular form of violence. Israel was striving to ameliorate conditions for those women in that situation by helping them to help themselves. For instance, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in cooperation with other government bodies, had established a unit to encourage women to open small and medium-sized businesses. The unit provided

financing, information, workshops, mentoring and networking opportunities for female entrepreneurs. The Authority for Small and Medium-size Enterprises, in cooperation with NGOs and the Negev Institute for Strategies and Development (NISPED), had helped Bedouin Muslim women in Israel to set up small businesses. Moreover, following a heated debate in Israel on such matters, and in line with the objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action, many of the basic social issues related to poverty among women were currently examined by the Israeli High Court of Justice.

90. Over the past decade, the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MASHAV) had offered various courses, attended by hundreds of women from around the world, including Palestinian women, on the promotion of women's role in development. The Golda Meir Mount Cammel International Training Centre (MCTC) had been organizing since 1961 courses, attended by more than 11,000 women from around the world, on socio-economic issues.

91. The struggle against the sex slave trade in women was essential. Israel, in cooperation with other countries, was investing a vast amount of energy in that issue. The transnational identity of women should transcend all racial, ethnic, religious and national boundaries. International cooperation for promoting women's rights and freedoms was necessary for ensuring peace, justice and freedom for all citizens of the world.

92. **Mr. Sin** Song Choi (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the objectives of the international community in the twenty-first century were full gender equality, development and peace. In order to guarantee human rights for all, it was imperative to protect and promote women's dignity and rights. Since the Beijing Conference, the international community had made considerable efforts to address women's issues, but there is still a long way to go. All over the world, women continued to be major victims of all negative economic repercussions, such as poverty, unemployment, diseases, discrimination and violence. Moreover, to arrive at a legal definition of women's rights, it was necessary to provide conditions enabling women participate in political, economic, social and all other activities on an equal footing with men and to secure their rights to education and to freely a freely chosen and fairly remunerated job.

93. Impunity for past crimes committed against women was a flagrant manifestation of discrimination and violence. All Member States of the United Nations should thoroughly investigate unresolved past crimes. It was an unavoidable duty of guilty countries to meet their obligation to offer apologies and compensation.

94. The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the achievement of de facto gender equality had been part of the policy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for more than half a century. In 1946, the Law on Gender Equality had been enacted and — since then — respect for women was reflected in the State's policies and measures and adopted by society as a whole, far beyond legal duty. The Government made every effort to fulfil its international obligations under the Convention for the Elimination of All form of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and would continue to cooperate with the international community for the protection and promotion of women's rights.

95. **Mr. Rokolaqa** (Fiji) said that the Universal Declaration of Human Right formed the basis on which men and women should enjoy their rights to life, peace and prosperity. To ensure the exercise of that right, the Fiji Government had enacted in 2003 the Family Act which would take effect in 2005. Other legal instruments in progress were an industrial relations bill, a mental health and treatment act and criminal code provisions on sexual offences and domestic violence. Community-based information activities regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) were carried out as part of a joint programme implemented by the Government and women's organizations. The Ministry for Women had had CEDAW translated into the vernacular. The Ministry, through its taskforce on violence against women, had launched media campaigns on the issue, training men in advocacy for the elimination of violence against women and stressing its economic costs to the country. The Attorney General cooperated with the Law Reform Commission on legislation pertaining to domestic violence.

96. Since 2001, Fiji had participated in the Women-peace-and-security programme of the United Nations Fund for the Development of Women (UNIFEM), aimed at promoting women's participation in the protection of families affected by conflicts, conflict prevention and resolution and peace consolidation. In

February 2002, the Secretariat of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat had organized in Fiji a symposium on Global Trade and Multilateral Agreements: Gender, Social and Economic Dimensions. The concluding declaration contained the measures necessary for integrating gender considerations in the area of trade, promoting women's active participation and ensuring the recognition of their work in the formal and informal sectors of the economy as crucial to speeding up economic growth. Women's empowerment was a key to maximum exploitation of the benefits of trade liberalization and the reduction or mitigation of its negative effects.

97. In 1995, Fiji had adopted a plan of action for women based on the Beijing commitments. Women's progress and gender equality implied that women's capacities and potential should be fully developed. That goal had not yet been attained. In that respect, Fiji ranked 81st among 171 countries listed in the Human Development Report 2003 of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP). Fiji also ranked low in terms of the gender empowerment measure (GEM) indicator, that assessed active participation in economic and political life.

98. There was a commitment to carry out a gender audit in five Ministries by 2005, and the Ministry of Education had set the targets of raising awareness of gender issues among officials at all levels of the Ministry and promoting a gender-sensitive school curriculum. The Government intended to review legislation with a view to achieving greater gender equality, ensuring a 30-40 percent representation for women in decision-making bodies, incorporating a specific definition of discrimination against women into the 1997 Constitution, reducing poverty by 5 percent annually by supporting microenterprises and small businesses and continuing the campaign aimed at eliminating violence against women and children.

99. Gender mainstreaming in government policies and programmes continued to be an enormous challenge because of cultural, structural and attitudinal barriers and severe resource and capacity constraints. Nonetheless, the Ministry for Women remained optimistic, given the vigilance and dynamic activities of women's NGOs and civil society and the Government's support for the Plan of Action for Women.

100. **Ms. Kleitman** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was a distortion of reality to affirm that Israel's security wall was intended to slow down the progress of Palestinian women. Israel had never wished to build the wall, since its policy has always been one of open frontiers, since June 1967. Currently, it had been obliged to construct it, after more than 21,000 Palestinian terrorist attacks committed against civilian targets had left more than 1,000 dead, among them children, students and aged people, Israelis and foreigners, for the sole purpose of deepening differences and making coexistence more difficult for both countries. The current Palestinian responsible officials could not or did not wish to fulfil their obligation to take measures against terrorists. Israel intended the wall to be only a provisional and non-violent means of defence.

101. **Ms. Rasheed** (Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, responded to the assertion that the suicide attacks had motivated the construction of the expansionist wall by Israel. She said that those attacks could not be separated from the distressing reality of the Palestinian people in the face of violence. The first suicide attack had occurred 27 years after the beginning of Israel's repressive occupation, after the illegal transportation of 350,000 Israelis, and after the death of thousands of Palestinians and tens of daily humiliations. There was a fundamental difference between the illegal acts committed by Palestinian persons or groups and the illegal practices of the Army, which implemented the official policies of the State. More than 3,340 Palestinians had been assassinated, including 750 children, by direct order of the Israeli Government, which constituted state terrorism. Violence would not stop before the elimination of its causes: the belligerent, prolonged and unjustified occupation and colonization of the Palestinian territory.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.